Joint Center
for
Political Studies

JCPS Conference Report

Number 6, October 1984

The Civil Rights Act: Two Decades Later

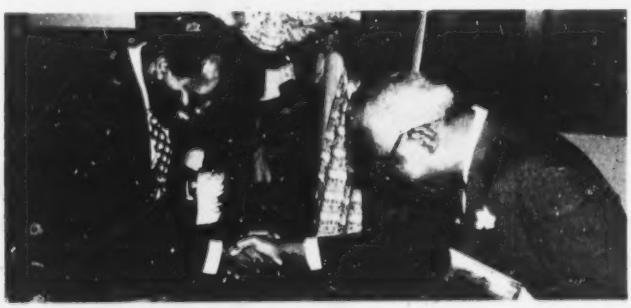
On June 28 and 29, the Joint Center for Political Studies sponsored a conference on "The Civil Rights Act Two Decades Later: An Assessment of Change and Challenge." Held at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C., the conference featured well-known scholars and political leaders, attracted audiences of several hundred persons, and received extensive news coverage in major media such as the New York Times. *Mrs. Coretta Scott King served as honorary chair. David Garrow, now professor of political science at the City University of New York, coordinated the conference for the Joint Center and prepared this account.*

The twentieth anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—widely cited as one of the most important pieces of legislation in American history—provided an excellent occasion for analyzing the goals that underlay the law, the effects it has had on American society, and the challenges that remain unmet. The conference was divided into three sessions to cover each of these topics separately.

But throughout all three sessions, speakers revealed an underlying dichotomy in scholarly views of the 1964 act and its effects upon American society over these last twenty years. Professor **John Hope Franklin** of Duke University, in his keynote address at the kick-off dinner just before the conference (see p. 3 of this issue of *Focus*), emphasized that the 1964 act was "at most, a modest achievement," because its substantive provisions, important as they were, targeted only the most blatant of America's centuries-long racial injustices. Experiences since 1964, historian Franklin noted, have further highlighted

> both the complexity of the problem and the inadequacy of all efforts to solve it so far. They suggest that in any effort to clear away the brambles and, yes, the jungle brought on by three centuries of the deliberate denigration of black Americans, more than the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is necessary.

That statute, Franklin declared, was only a "*step* toward decency in human relations that should have been taken in 1619," and merely an early step in a lengthy, ongoing journey.



Vernon Jordan, John Hope Franklin

Left to right: Glenn Loury, Henry Aaron, Phyllis Wallace, Wiley Branton, Louis Nunez, John Slaughter, Gary Orfield, Arthur Fletcher

Left to right: Louis Harris, Julius Levonne Chambers, David J. Garrow

Basic Goals and Public Attitudes

Franklin's sober comments were echoed by political scientist **David J. Garrow** at the conference's first session on June 28. Garrow, a professor at the City University of New York and author of three books on Martin Luther King, Jr. and the southern civil rights movement, stressed "how relatively modest the actual provisions of the 1964 Act were when compared to the far larger agenda the movement was then setting for itself." Garrow noted the erroneous assertions by some present-day commentators "that 'by 1968, the entire legislative agenda of the civil rights movement had been enacted'. . . . that the civil rights movement simply sought the elimination of explicit, formal racial discrimination, that it trumpeted a 'colorblind' approach to American life, that it was concerned with 'process' and 'opportunity,' and not with substantive outcomes or tangible results." Criticizing the "stunning inaccuracy" of such portrayals of the civil rights movement's goals, Garrow said that the movement's more basic challenge to America's *economic* subordination and exploitation of racial minorities is often ignored or downplayed today. Numerous socioeconomic indicators reflect that most black Americans have benefited little, if at all, from the statutory changes of the 1960s, and Garrow foresaw little possibility of present-day activists generating much support for the "truly redistributive economic policies" that Dr. King and other movement leaders had advocated in the mid- and late-1960s. He conceded that some might find his perspective "excessively pessimistic," but noted that the conclusions of numerous scholars, such as University of Chicago sociologist William J. Wilson, point toward a bleak economic future for black America and "the urban black underclass" in particular.

Noted civil rights attorney **Julius LeVonne Chambers,** now executive director of the Legal Defense and Educational Fund, took issue with what he saw as the unduly critical assessments of the 1964 Act propounded by Franklin and Garrow. Chambers said that such emphasis on the law's modesty seemed to parallel current efforts "to limit its reach." Such interpretations, he continued, might "serve as a further vehicle for this administration to limit the intended meaning of the Act" and seemed contrary to "what we considered then and what I would consider today the real meaning of the Act."

Pollster **Louis Harris,** offering an expert's view of public opinion on civil rights since the 1960s, highlighted the growing political awareness of America'a black electorate but voiced a less hopeful outlook for genuine understanding between the races. "Blacks sense correctly," Harris explained,

> that the white community simply doesn't know what it's like to be black in America in the mid-1980s. They feel that white America by 1984 has not progressed a whole lot from white America all through their long history on this continent. Indeed, we tested this recently by asking the public what they thought had happened to the status of blacks since Ronald Reagan came into office. Among blacks, only 33 percent said nothing had changed and only 8 percent said they were better off. A clear majority of 57 percent said they were worse off. Among whites, by contrast, 53 percent saw no change for blacks under Reagan, 17 percent said they were worse off, and a *higher* 25 percent said they were *better off.*

Such a tremendous gap between black and white perceptions of black economic conditions, Harris suggested, could only bode ill for America.

Former National Urban League executive director **Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.** explicitly endorsed Franklin's and Garrow's characterizations of the 1964 Act and emphasized that implementation of the act's provisions has been a recurring problem, especially in recent years. The act has had the important effect, however, of "democratizing" black leadership, and thus, according to Jordan, there have emerged over twenty year's time "five new definable classes of black leadership that were virtually nonexistant in 1964"—black elected officials; "blacks who hold quasi-public, quasi-private positions," and "directly affect public policy" (foundation executives, for example); "blacks who have pierced the corporate veil," either by sitting on corporate boards or by holding management positions; "indigenous leadership" at the local level, whose valuable role has recently acquired added political influence; and "the new black entrepreneur."

Effects of the Civil Rights Act

The conference's second session, which focused on the impact of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, was chaired by attorney **Wiley Branton,** former director of the Voter Education Project. Economist **Phyllis A. Wallace,** professor of management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, presented a detailed analysis of how Title VII of the 1964 act, which prohibited discrimination in all aspects of the employment process, has affected black economic progress over the ensuing twenty years. "Statistics on employment and income in the 1980s indicate that, relative to whites, blacks are apparently no better off than they were two decades ago," Wallace observed. "Great economic disparities separate blacks and whites." While studies "indicate some success for affirmative action in increasing employment and upgrading occupational status between 1974 and 1980," since then "we have suffered a major setback." Although numerous individual economic success stories can be cited, Wallace concluded, "the economic gains attained by blacks during the past twenty years that can be associated with implementation of the

Left to right: Milton D. Morris, David Broder, Charles V. Hamilton, Mervyn Dymally, Antonia Hernandez, John Lewis

employment discrimination laws are far less than what advocates of these policies had initially expected. . . ." **Henry Aaron,** a senior economist at the Brookings Institution, Harvard professor **Glenn Loury,** and former assistant secretary of Labor **Arthur A. Fletcher** discussed Wallace's analysis, placing it in the context of historical developments and current socioeconomic trends.

University of Chicago political scientist **Gary Orfield,** a nationally known expert on educational desegregation, presented the second major paper at this conference session. He implicitly took issue with the more critical perspectives of Franklin, Garrow, and Wallace. The impact of the 1964 act's education provisions "has been pervasive and has extended far beyond the issues to which enforcement was initially addressed," Orfield said. "Its enforcement transformed southern education. Between 1964 and 1970, the South changed from the most to the least segregated region in the United States." However, Orfield noted, meaningful enforcement of the Act's school desegregation mandate ended with the Johnson administration in 1969, and "there has been very little significant progress since that period ended." Not only has the Reagan administration "refused to enforce the Civil Rights Act," but "it has stopped collecting much of the basic data essential for enforcement of the law," Orfield pointed out. Thus, he concluded, "in spite of the proof that the Civil Rights Act can powerfully reduce discrimination," its longstanding nonenforcement had sapped its provisions of their remarkable potential strength. Unless "there is a rededication to enforcement of the law, the Civil Rights Act could become as meaningless as the Reconstruction era civil rights laws that were vitiated in the late nineteenth century." Dr. **John Slaughter,** Chancellor of the University of Maryland, and **Louis Nunez,** president of the National Puerto Rican Coalition, affirmed Professor Orfield's pessimistic view of current trends in educational opportunity.

Politics, Coalitions, and Civil Rights

The conference's third and final session, chaired by the Joint Center's director of research, **Milton D. Morris,** considered developments in black political empowerment since 1964 and the major alterations that the civil rights coalition has undergone over the past twenty years. Columbia University political scientist **Charles V. Hamilton** discussed the question of an economically oriented civil rights agenda that had been raised at the conference's initial session. Such an agenda, Hamilton stated,

> inevitably calls for a proactive government, one that sees government doing more, not less as a stimulant to effect socioeconomic change. But many former allies in the old civil rights coalition do not sincerely and philosophically believe in such a governmental role. In fact, they do not see this as a "civil rights" matter in the traditional sense of that term. They favor a more market-oriented economy: less government regulation, less government initiative and intervention. They are fiscal conservatives, and they do not see this as inconsistent with their earlier support for a civil liberties-oriented civil rights movement.

Donna Shalala, Arthur Flemming

"The old coalition," Hamilton explained,

> has fractured over basically philosophical differences over the role of government in the economy. If this is the problem, its implications are reasonably clear. It requires new coalitions that might well not depend on the same active participants of the old coalition. Some of these earlier participants simply have a different relationship to the economy. They are not prepared to enlist in a political struggle that challenges the fundamental premises of a market economy. They are less vulnerable, less at risk than some of their previous allies. They do not perceive or feel the same threat from current economic conditions as their former civil rights allies. Thus, the new coalition will have to build on the convergence of interests of those who share similar positions of economic vulnerability.

What this then suggests, Hamilton said is "more conscious efforts to fashion policies and strategies that seek 'deracialized' solutions to economic policies. For example, 'full employment' and government-supported health policies ought to be seen as beneficial to an array of groups that cuts across racial lines." However, Hamilton noted, "the liberal-progressive coalition that might be formed to pursue the economic agenda" likely would not be a coalition able to agree on many of the affirmative action legal remedies that civil rights proponents have emphasized in recent years. "Some people," he said, "will see the latter as containing zero-sum results they are not willing to live with, notwithstanding their otherwise liberal leanings. And in the process of deciding what goals to pursue, the present-day civil rights movement has to make some clear strategic choices."

"In the final analysis," Hamilton concluded,

> the basic challenge to the civil rights movement twenty

years after the 1964 Act is to confront the difficult choices of whether to continue to emphasize race-specific goals (in recognition of obvious past ills) or to emphasize more holistic policies and strategies that are aimed at advancing racial interests while at the same time incorporating other groups in a political alliance aimed at challenging fundamental socioeconomic structural problems. To choose the latter is to alter the traditional understanding of the 'civil rights movement.' But at the same time it puts that movement precisely where it has always been—at the vanguard of leadership for change in American society.

Washington Post political correspondent **David Broder,** Atlanta city council member and movement veteran **John Lewis,** and **Ralph Neas**, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, all added their thoughts to Hamilton's analysis. Neas, sounding a distinctly different note than other speakers, contended that "the last three and a half years on Capitol Hill have generally been good years" for the civil rights coalition, and that that record of success—extension and strengthening of the Voting Rights Act, passage of the Martin Luther King, Jr. national holiday bill, and blunting of various "new right" initiatives—oftentimes had been "an untold story in the press."

Neas gave equal emphasis, however, to the way the Reagan administration "seizes every opportunity to weaken the law and to restrict the remedies that have long been available to minorities, to women, and to other parts of the civil rights constituency," efforts that can be defeated only if civil rights proponents energetically communicate this story to the American people. "It's no different from the states' rights talk of the fifties and sixties: 'separate but equal,' 'freedom of choice.'"

The conference's final session also featured a panel discussion involving U.S. Representative **Mervyn Dymally** (D-CA); Hunter College President **Donna Shalala;** Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) vice-president **Antonia Hernandez; Judith Lichtman,** executive director of the Women's Legal Defense Fund; and former U.S. Civil Rights Commission chairman **Arthur Flemming,** now chairman of the Citizen's Commission on Civil Rights. The participants offered several prescriptions for building and expanding the present-day political strength of the "civil rights coalition." Ms. Hernandez of MALDEF observed that "our coalition building has begun at the leadership level, but it has not filtered down to our respective groups, and unless we take it upon ourselves to educate our people and to educate other groups about why it's important for us to coalesce . . . this broad coalition and the potential political power that it might bring will not be fulfilled."

Arthur Flemming, echoing Ralph Neas's remarks, noted that over the last three and one-half years "the executive branch has provided the kind of leadership that has moved us backward instead of forward in the civil rights area." Agreeing with Hernandez, Flemming said that the coalition must work at the grass roots level to focus voters' attention on the administration's civil rights record and dedicate itself "to bringing about a reversal of what has been taking place during the last three and a half years."

Each of the conference's sessions highlighted the underlying tension between two different but not opposite perspectives on civil rights developments since the landmark 1964 act became law. One perspective, articulated by speakers like Chambers, Orfield, and Neas, stressed the substantial gains and potential that the Civil Rights Act exemplified. The second, articulated by Franklin, Garrow, and Wallace, emphasized the relative modesty of recent gains. Yet speakers for both perspectives took a dim view of the present political climate and threatening future facing traditional civil rights forces. Nonetheless, as Hamilton's, Hernandez's and Flemming's remarks all indicated, current activists take this situation as a challenge to develop new coalitions and strategies that will prove effective in the present environment.

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Left to right: Coretta Scott King, Frank Press, Eddie N. Williams

Health Problems, Political Cures

by Christiane B. Hale

(Dr. Hale is an associate professor in the Department of Epidemiology at the University of Alabama (Birmingham) School of Public Health. This paper reflects her views and not those of the school or the university.)

Nearly three years after the 1981 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, which embodied the "Reagan Revolution" in social programs, students of public health—including elected officials charged with policy implementation—are clamoring for news of its effects. But the information needed to measure effects nationwide is not readily available. It seems that one consequence of budget-cutting is a clogging of the information pipeline: it is late 1984, and detailed information about the health status of Americans is available only for 1981.

We do, however, have some information from states, counties, cities, and towns that signals where the burdens are falling. This information suggests that women and children have suffered most under the budget cuts. For example, according to annual statistical reports from each of the 50 states, it appears that by 1982:

- The percentage of pregnant women receiving prenatal care late in their pregnancies or not at all increased from a range of 3-5 percent to one of 6-10 percent. Black women were twice as likely to have late care or none.
- Program freezes or reductions created numerous situations in which poor women and children were unable to obtain any medical care: money available for medical care of indigent women was cut by 18 percent, and the number of children living in poverty rose by 30 percent with no commensurate increase in health care funding. Also, the benefits paid to these children's families by Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) declined.

These cuts affect the black community disproportionately. The reasons for this are complex, and include differences in the age structure of the black population (which is younger than the white population), the dependency of blacks on the now vulnerable public health system, and a pattern among black women of beginning childbearing at younger ages and before stable unions are established.

Overall, in 1980 the U.S. population was about 12 percent black. Yet over 16 percent of the babies born in 1981 were black, and almost 16 percent of preschoolers and children 5 to 14 years old are black. Cuts in programs aimed at these age groups, then, will affect blacks more heavily than whites. Such cuts include reductions in Medicaid expenditures for children and a drastic redesign of AFDC.

In discussions of the "safety net," women and children tend to be grouped with the elderly. Yet, as William O'Hare noted in the July issue of this journal, benefits to the elderly have been maintained or increased, while expenditures for children have been cut.

Comparing Health Status

Budget cuts appear to have increased the long-standing disparity between the health status of black women and children and their white counterparts. The infant mortality rate (the number of deaths in a group of babies who have not yet had their first birthday) is widely accepted as the best measure of a group's health status. Despite its apparently high standard of living, the United States has one of the highest infant mortality rates of all industrialized nations—higher, even, than those of Spain, Ireland, or Italy.

In fact, however, the infant mortality rate for whites is about 7 deaths per thousand births, almost as low as the infant mortality rates of Sweden, Norway, and other nations with the lowest rates. It is the rate for dark-skinned minorities (over 90 percent of whom are black) that pushes the overall rate up so high; the minority rate is 14 to 16 per thousand live births, nearly twice that of whites.

There are no obvious biological reasons for this difference. Rather, blacks are more likely to be poor, putting them at risk in a country that, alone among industrialized nations, has a dual health care system for women and children. Those who have the means purchase health care in the private sector. Those who do not are dependent on the public sector. And because of poverty, black mothers and children are disproportionately dependent on public-sector care. Since funding for public health care has been reduced drastically by the recent cuts, black women and their children have borne the burden.

Many studies from local communities suggest that the infant mortality gap has widened, especially in the last two years. In some areas, infant mortality rates of blacks are like those in developing nations; in Washington, D.C., for example, 29 black babies per thousand die before reaching one year of age, compared with a rate of 34 deaths per thousand births in Honduras. In those same areas, infant mortality rates of whites are at or below the U.S. rate for whites. This pattern is particularly likely to occur where there is no public sector care (an increasingly common phenomenon in the 1980s) and where private practitioners are either nonexistent or unwilling to accept Medicaid. In 12 of Alabama's 67 counties, for example, there is no prenatal care for poor women.

Many black families that are dependent on public sector care are without a father or other adult male (over 70 percent of black children live in such families). Many of these families are headed by women who first became pregnant as teenagers. Teenage mothers often leave school—frequently under pressure from school authorities. Poorly educated, these mothers are unable to compete in an increasingly demanding job market. They tend to get less-than-adequate prenatal care and their babies are twice as likely to be low weight (under 5-½ lbs.) at birth. Low-weight babies are more likely to die or to suffer lifelong handicaps than normal-weight babies.

These children's fathers are disproportionately unemployed or underemployed, and in 27 states, if they live with their families the families lose eligibility for AFDC and related benefits, including Medicaid coverage. In other words, in over half the states, poor families with men living at home are barred from benefits paid to equally poor families headed by women. This policy is rooted in the attempt 50 years ago to alleviate the Depression-era plight of widows and orphans, but ironically, policies originally intended to protect families now are harmful to them. These policies, too, affect black women and children disproportionately.

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Blacks and the 1990 Census

by William O'Hare

(The author is a senior research associate at the Joint Center.)

Although 1990 may seem a long way off, people at the Census Bureau are already planning the next census. Because of the massive size of the census-taking operation (over 100 million census questionnaires will be printed and probably more than a quarter million employees hired and trained), plans have to be made early. During the next year or two, some of the most crucial questions regarding how the census will be conducted will have to be resolved to make sure everything is ready by April 1, 1990.

Part of the planning process consists of a series of public meetings in which the Census Bureau solicits input from interested citizens. Several of these meetings have already been held, and many more will be conducted over the next several months. Listed below are the dates and locations of the forthcoming meetings, which provide an opportunity for citizens to bring up the problems their communities encountered in the 1980 census and to discuss ways in which the Census Bureau might eliminate the problems in 1990.

A few issues are of particular importance to blacks. In the 1980 census, as in previous ones, blacks were missed at a much higher rate than whites. This "undercount" has negative ramifications that may not be immediately apparent. A large number of federal and state programs use census figures to distribute public funds. Over $100 billion in federal funds alone are allocated to states and localities on the basis, in part, of census figures. Consequently, undercounts by the census can result in a community not receiving all the federal and state funds to which it is entitled. In many other areas as well, such as politics or business, undercounts diminish the perceived size of a group or community and, perhaps indirectly, the amount of attention it receives. For example, businesses use census figures to make marketing and site location decisions.

Reapportionment of the U.S. Congress is based on census data, and the census figures are also used to draw new political districts in states and localities every 10 years. To assess the likely impact of a redistricting plan on black voting strength, it is important to have an accurate reflection of where the black population lives. Undercounts obviously muddle the picture.

Another aspect of the census-taking process that is especially important to blacks is the temporary jobs the decennial census creates. Over a quarter million people were hired for the 1980 census. While most of these jobs are not very high paying, for low-income blacks, the money could be a welcome addition to regular income. Furthermore, hiring black enumerators for black neighborhoods is thought to reduce resistance to the census-taking process, and thus reduce the undercount of blacks.

One of the big questions in planning for the 1990 census is how much the process will be automated. A high level of automation could mean that many of the jobs formerly available at census time would be lost. Those who are hired, however, should receive valuable training and experience in automated data processing.

In the current political climate, the budget for the 1990 census could be a target for cutbacks. Some of the cost-cutting recommendations may have negative effects on the count of blacks. Outreach efforts in the 1980 census appear to have reduced the undercount of blacks from about 7.5 percent in 1970 to 5.0 percent in 1980. But these outreach and promotion efforts cost money and are likely candidates for elimination if the bureau's budget is tight.

The year 1990 seems very distant, but to ensure that the needs and viewpoints of black communities are reflected in the 1990 census, blacks must become involved now, during the planning stages.

Dates and Locations, Census Bureau Public Meetings *(starting time is around 8:30 a.m.)*

11/1/84	Louisville, KY—	Jefferson County Courthouse
11/8/84	Albany, NY—	Cultural Education Center Auditorium, Empire State Plaza
11/15/84	Oklahoma City, OK—	Myriad Convention Center
11/27/84	Los Angeles, CA—	Water and Power Auditorium
11/29/84	Sacramento, CA—	State Capitol, Hearing Rm. 4202
12/4/84	Little Rock, AR—	Univ. of Arkansas, Little Rock, Conference Center Excelsior Hotel
12/6/84	Baton Rouge, LA—	Louisiana State Library Auditorium
1/10/85	San Francisco—	to be announced
3/5/85	San Juan, PR—	"
3/9/85	Montgomery, AL—	"
3/15/85	Washington, DC—	"
3/26/85	Phoenix, AZ—	"
4/17/85	Providence, RI—	"
4/18/85	Hartford, CT—	"
4/24/85	Richmond, VA—	"
5/7/85	Topeka, KS—	"
5/8/85	Jefferson, MO—	"
6/16/85	Harrisburg, PA—	"
5/23/85	Pittsburg, PA—	"
6/11/85	Anchorage, AK—	"
6/12/85	Juneau, AK—	"
6/18/85	St. Paul, MN—	"
6/19/85	Des Moines, IA—	"

Telescope

BEO Business Meetings

Several of the organizations of black elected officials will be holding meetings during the next couple of months. For further information, contact people are listed for the forthcoming sessions.

National Conference of Black Mayors
Mid-Year Meeting
October 26-27, 1984
Howard Inn
Washington, D.C.
Contact: Sam Tucker (202) 628-1411

National Black Caucus of State Legislators
Annual Meeting
November 27-December 2, 1984
Los Angeles Hilton
Los Angeles, California
Contact: Reesa McMurtry (202) 624-5457

National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials
Annual Meeting
November 23-28, 1984
Indiana Convention Center
Indianapolis, Indiana
Contact: Alice Hans (202) 626-3510

To all black elected officials:

Each of you should have received at least one questionnaire from the Joint Center asking for current information for the 1985 edition of *Black Elected Officials: A National Roster.*

We thank those of you who have returned the questionnaire and urge the rest of you to do so promptly.

Employment Recovery Bypasses Blacks

After many months at record-breaking levels, the unemployment rate—7.5 percent—is back down to about where it was just prior to the 1981-82 recession. But for many segments of the population—blacks, Hispanics, youth—the unemployment rate is considerably higher than the overall figure and higher than it was prior to the recession. And the number of discouraged workers (those who have given up looking for work and who are not counted among the officially unemployed) has increased by more than 200,000, up from about 1 million in 1981 to 1.3 million in August 1984.

The biggest unemployment problems continue to be among blacks and teens. While the unemployment rate for blacks has declined significantly below its peak during the recession, when it was 20 percent, it is still more than double the overall rate and significantly higher than it was in July 1981. And one out of every three discouraged workers is black. The unemployment rate for black teens—41 percent, the highest unemployment rate for any subgroup by far—is 2.6 times that of white teens.

The Full Employment Action Council, along with the Americans for Democratic Action, the Children's Defense Fund, the Roosevelt Centennial Youth Project, and other groups, has issued a report entitled *Whose Recovery Is It Anyway?* which takes a close look at unemployment among those segments of the population that the recent recovery seems to have overlooked. The report is available from the Full Employment Action Council, 815 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006 (202/393-7415).

Unemployment Rates

	July 1981	August 1984
Overall	7.0%	7.5%
Whites	6.2%	6.4%
Blacks	13.6%	16.0%
Hispanics	9.9%	10.7%
Teens	18.1%	18.4%
Black teens	40.0%	41.7%

Figures are from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Full Employment Action Council.

District of Columbia Honors Frank D. Reeves

On September 28, District Mayor Marion Barry and City Council Chairman David Clarke signed legislation naming the new D.C. Municipal Center at 14th and U Streets, N.W., in honor of Frank D. Reeves. Mr. Reeves, who died in 1973, was the Joint Center's first executive director, serving from 1970 to 1972. He also played a major role in the center's founding. Prior to his work with the center, Mr. Reeves had distinguished himself in several areas: he advised President John F. Kennedy on minority affairs; as assistant counsel to Thurgood Marshall, he was involved in many civil-rights cases during the 1950s and 60s; he served on the faculty of Howard University's School of Law, and just prior to joining JCPS, he was a fellow at the Metropolitan Applied Research Center.

. . . Political Cures

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Solving the Problems

By now it should be clear that the health problems of mothers and children—infant mortality, low birth weights, teenage pregnancy—are actually social and political problems. Infant mortality rates among blacks do not *have* to be twice those of whites. Teenage pregnancy does not *have* to trigger a life of chronic despair. Being a poor family does *not* have to mean living without a father. Nor do female-headed families *have* to be poor.

Moreover, the health problems of mothers and children are important *black* issues. If a state legislature fails to appropriate funds to supplement the ever-decreasing federal funding of Medicaid, Title V (prenatal and well-child care), and Title X (family planning), most of those who do without care will be black. If a state fails to cover "optional Medicaid" families (those with a man at home), most families driven apart will be black. If a city or town cuts support for local hospitals, most of those suffering will be black mothers and children.

Although we cannot yet be certain of the health effects of recent budget cuts, we can reasonably guess that those who suffer most will be mothers and children dependent on public health programs, most of whom are black. Their suffering is needless, but it will continue unless the leadership at all levels of government appreciates the importance of the issues discussed here. If we allow the children now enduring poverty—one child in five generally and one of every two black children—to suffer today, we will all suffer tomorrow.

A Dangerous Indifference

by Joan Ganz Cooney

(Ms. Cooney is president of the Children's Television Workshop. The following article is adapted from a speech she gave before the American Association of University Women.)

Indifference is the prevailing national attitude toward children. While our major political and industrial rivals are spending billions to realize the potential of their youth, we tighten school budgets and cut back on science education. Even now, science and mathematics form the core of educational programs in Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union.

Indifference becomes dangerous neglect when considered in light of the assertion by Karl Menninger, a renowned American psychiatrist, that "what a society does to its children, they—the children—will do to that society." And if children generally are met with indifference, consider the plight of poor children, a virtually mute minority who lack vocal and potent representatives.

I wonder whether we, as a nation, are aware that we risk losing our position as a leading industrial power if we persist in our indifference toward children. We seem to have forgotten that cuts in social spending are *not* risk-free in an advanced industrial society such as ours. We should know by now that cutting budgets does not eliminate the needs; it only allows them to pile up. Not only will we lose the productive adults this country needs, but at the same time we will continue to incur enormous social costs such as welfare payments and increased crime.

What's more, there is no "economy" involved if, in the end, we must spend $30,000 each year to keep a person in jail when a comparable amount, invested earlier for education and training, might have made that same person a productive member of society. Spending to improve the health, literacy, and math and science skills of our children must be seen as an investment in the country's future. *Changed Lives*, a recently released study of a preschool project in Ypsilanti, Michigan, showed that by age 19 children who had had the advantage of a high-quality preschool education were twice as likely to have jobs or attend college; they were also involved in 20 percent fewer arrests, detentions, and dropouts.

As Adam Smith noted two centuries ago, "The skill, dexterity, and knowledge of a nation's people is the most powerful engine of its economic growth." And this engine is fueled by education.

A Role for Television

Children's television is another excellent indicator of how this country views its children. Television is our most powerful and most pervasive medium for educating (as well as entertaining and informing) the nation's youth. In a time of compressed educational budgets, television is still a cost-effective way to reach millions of young people. Yet this valuable resource is sorely underused.

Right now, there is not a single daily quality show for children on commercial television. Public television, once the premier source of quality children's programming, now has only one original daily series on the air year-round: "Sesame Street." The science series, "3-2-1 Contact," adds new programs each year, but does not yet have enough new shows coming on stream to broadcast throughout the year. Other PBS children's shows are either being repeated or have been cancelled.

One can only conclude that our society does not value children highly enough to offer them something more than mindless cartoons on Saturday mornings or empty, so-called "adventure" series in prime time. Current television programming, then, would seem to confirm further our national indifference toward children.

This is especially troubling in an age when children are watching so much television that the medium has acquired a formative role in their social and intellectual development. Its impact seems particularly strong on low-income children, making it doubly important that we use it constructively.

Research has confirmed television's great potential for developing the skills, knowledge, mind, and character of children. Although the precise methods for the effective educational use of television are still being developed, we must not allow its promise to go unfulfilled. Nor can we become complacent in the search for other means of overcoming a dangerous indifference to our children—our future.

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